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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Program Announced for Russia-U.K. Year of Culture

By Des Brown

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Currently running on the BBC is a three-part documentary, "Strange Days: Cold War Britain" in which historian Dominic Sandbrook evokes the social and cultural history of Britain during the dark days of conflict between East and West. Writing in The Daily Telegraph, Sandbrook stated: "One of the arguments of our series is that in the Cold War, the decisive weapon wasn't the atom bomb. It was our popular culture."

Now, 22 years on from the break up of the Soviet Union, culture is being used as a way to connect the two countries and Russian-British relations took a major step forward with the announcement Thursday of the largest ever cultural exchange: the Russia-U.K. Year of Culture, a program organized by the British Council and Russian Ministry of Cultural Affairs

The 2014 Year of Culture seeks to build relations at a social, institutional and governmental level through exploring cultural heritage. Running throughout the year, it will embrace

everything from James Bond to Soyuz. Arts, education and language will be at the center of the cultural celebration. Its first sponsor is BP, who have a proven track record of supporting the arts in Russia.

"More than 250 events in the sphere of culture, science, education and sports, which will be held both in Russia and Britain, will undoubtedly attract the attention of many people, including youth," said Olga Golodets, the Russian deputy prime minister for social affairs.

The British Council is responsible for the events in Russia and the Russian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs for events in Britain.

Though events will begin in January, the program will be officially launched in April with an exhibition, "The Golden Age of the Russian Avant-Garde" at Moscow's Manezh that will be curated by British film director Peter Greenaway.

Among the British cultural highlights Muscovites will be able to enjoy in 2014 is the exhibit "Designing 007: Fifty Years of Bond Style" at the Multimedia Art Museum in June. The Designing 007 exhibition highlights the artwork, sets, costumes, gadgets and cars from the James Bond film series. It was originally staged to critical success and large visitor numbers at London's Barbican between July and September 2012 as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of Bond.

"Dressing the Screen: The Rise of Fashion Film," brings together 75 years of fashion design in film, including SHOW studio's Nick Knight and Ruth Hogben, Alexander McQueen, Tim Walker, Rifat Ozbek, Vivienne Westwood, Ossie Clark, Hussain Chalayan, Gareth Pugh, Henry Holland and Burberry.

There will be screenings of nine of Alfred Hitchcock's early silent works from the 1920s at the Strelka Institute. The films were restored by the British Film Institute and will be shown with live musical accompaniment. The Hitchcock films have already played in London as part of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, toured the U.S. and played at the Shanghai Film Festival in June.

In theater, Northern Ireland Opera's production of Benjamin Britten's "The Turn of the Screw" will be performed at Novaya Opera. There will also be by performances by the National Theatre of Scotland, the Royal Shakespeare Company, Scottish Ballet, Gecko, the Sadler's Wells Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, and the Young Vic Theatre and 2014 will include a tour of the Globe's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" to Russian cities.

In music, the London Philharmonic Orchestra will close the 2014 Rostropovich Festival with a performance of Britten's "War Requiem," conducted by Moscow-born Vladimir Jurowski.

A larger list of events and more information can be found at the website of the cultural year.

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